



ADVISORY NEIGHBORHOOD COMMISSION 6E
PO Box 93020 Brentwood Station, Washington, DC 20090

May 18, 2021

Theodore van Houten
Transportation Planner
District Department of Transportation
55 M Street SE
Washington, DC 20003

RE: Response to DDOT NOI to Install a Median on New York Avenue NW between North Capitol Street and First Street NW (NOI 21-30-PSD)

Dear Mr. Van Houten:

On May 4, 2021, at the duly noticed and regularly scheduled meeting of the Advisory Neighborhood Commission 6E ("ANC 6E" or "Commission") and with a quorum of 6 out of seven Commissioners and the public present, ANC 6E approved the following letter by a vote of 6 in favor, 0 against, and 0 abstentions.

On March 5, 2021, the District Department of Transportation ("DDOT") issued a Notice of Intent ("NOI") to install a raised brick median on the Unit Block of New York Avenue NW between North Capitol Street and First Street NW (NOI 21-30-PSD). The objective of this NOI is to prevent mid-block u-turns, prevent prohibited turn movements into and out of N Street NW, and to create a protected pedestrian refuge island on New York Avenue NW.

ANC 6E is an affected party to this NOI because the Unit Block of New York Avenue NW serves as the northern boundary of Single Member District 6E06 within ANC 6E. Therefore, ANC 6E respectfully requests that DDOT give these comments on the NOI great weight pursuant to Section 13 of the Advisory Neighborhood Commission Act.

New York Avenue is a high volume arterial street that is characterized by heavy congestion during peak periods and speeding and unsafe driving behaviors during lighter volume off-peak periods. At the east end of the project area, the intersection of New York Avenue and North Capitol Street has the highest number of vehicle crashes of any intersection on lower North Capitol Street, with more than twice the number of collisions as the next highest intersection.¹

¹ North Capitol Street Needs Assessment, p.19. Available: <https://www.nomabid.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/North-Capitol-Street-Needs-Assessment-Report-011619-WEB.pdf>. Collisions at



The intersection of New York Avenue and First Street NW is also a high-crash intersection, where neighbors complain that vehicle collisions are a weekly occurrence.² The present NOI is an improvement on current conditions, but does not adequately address the pressing safety concerns at either intersection bookending the project area. Additionally, the median noses at the intersections with First Street NW and North Capitol Street should be revised to create accommodating pedestrian refuge islands and help control dangerous turning maneuvers.

The raised median is included in the Mid-City East Livability Study as one of several recommendations for the intersection of New York Avenue and North Capitol Street to improve pedestrian conditions and safety.³ The Livability Study specifically recommends that the raised median extend beyond the crosswalks to redirect vehicles from entering the pedestrian space.⁴ However this element of the Livability Study recommendation was omitted from the present NOI for the median at both the First Street NW and North Capitol Street intersections.

The NOI design ends the median at the east leg of the intersection of New York Avenue and First Street NW, 12 feet before the eastern edge of the pedestrian crosswalk (Figure 1). The current design of the intersection of First Street and New York Avenue NW features a median that extends on either side of the east leg crosswalk to provide a pedestrian refuge island in the center of the busy intersection (Figure 2). In addition to creating a safe area for pedestrians, the existing median design also prevents drivers turning left from First Street southbound New York Avenue eastbound from cutting the corner and forces drivers to take a tighter and more left turn. Drivers frequently collide with the median at this intersection when turning left from First Street southbound onto New York Avenue eastbound.⁵ These collisions are due in part to a lack of visibility for the median. Nearby residents have attempted to improve visibility by placing orange traffic cones on the median, as seen in Figure 2. Collisions with the median are also the result of drivers speeding and driving dangerously through this intersection during off-peak hours. Residents of ANC 6E have requested that DDOT conduct a traffic safety assessment (TSA) to address the fundamentally dangerous traffic conditions at this intersection (Ref: 21-00155439).

this intersection are so frequent that the study team saw several near misses and one collision during field observations (p. 32).

² <https://www.popville.com/2021/04/dangerous-median/>

³ Mid-City East Livability Study, p.10-1.

⁴ *Ibid*, p.11-2.

⁵ <https://www.popville.com/2021/04/dangerous-median/>.

Figure 1: NOI Design for the Intersection of First Street and New York Avenue NW

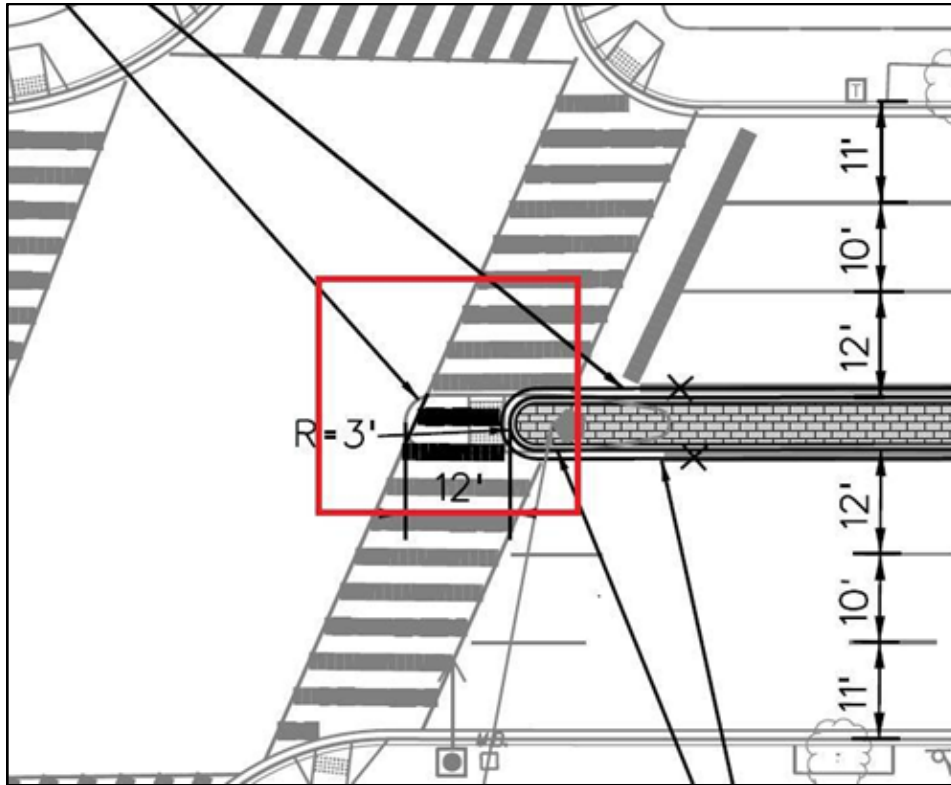
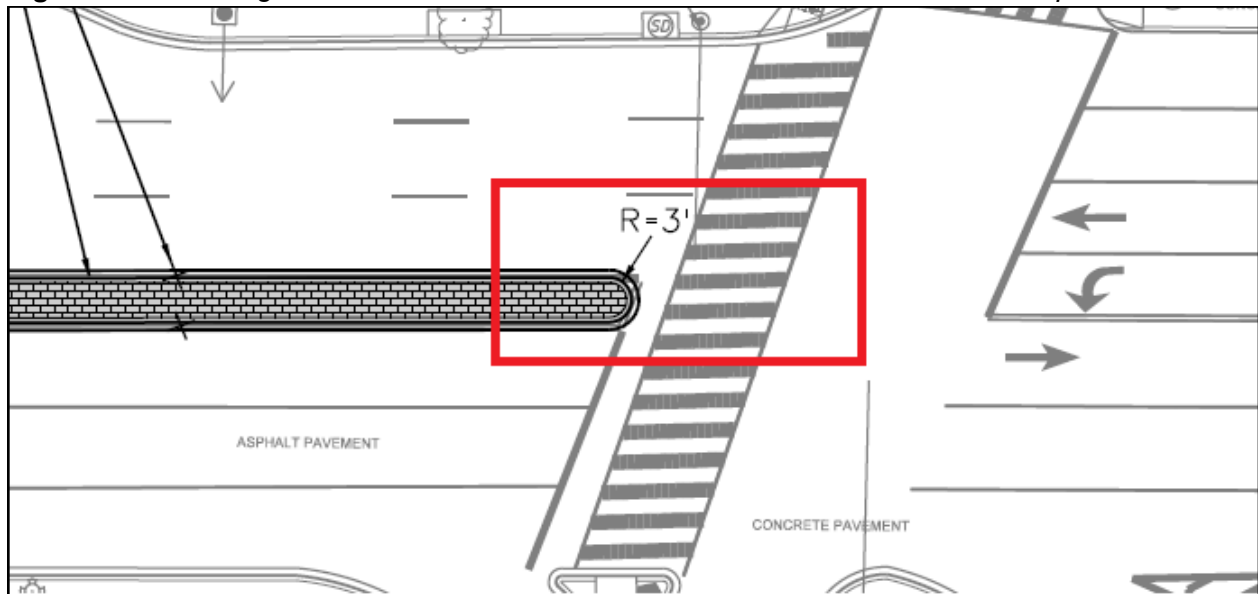


Figure 2: Current Conditions at the Intersection of New York Avenue and First Street NW



The NOI proposes the median at the intersection of New York Avenue and North Capitol Street end prior to the east leg crosswalk. Extending the median through the crosswalk would create a pedestrian refuge island at this dangerous intersection, where it is especially here due to a high pedestrian crossing volume and high number of pedestrians that cross against the signal.⁶ Extending the median would also discourage drivers from taking a dangerous u-turn from New York Avenue eastbound onto New York Avenue westbound.

Figure 3: NOI Design for the Intersection of New York Avenue NW and North Capitol Street



ANC 6E supports the intent of the NOI and asserts that a raised brick median can improve traffic safety on the Unit Block of New York Avenue NW and supports the construction. However, ANC 6E also makes the following recommendations to improve this NOI:

- The NOI plans should be modified to extend the median through the crosswalk on the east leg of the intersection of First Street and New York Avenue NW to create a pedestrian refuge island and prevent turning drivers from cutting the corner through the crosswalk.
- The NOI plans should be modified to extend the median through the crosswalk on the west leg of the intersection of New York Avenue NW and North Capitol Street to create a pedestrian refuge island and discourage u-turns.
- The end of the median on the east leg of the intersection of First Street and New York Avenue NW should be clearly demarcated to increase visibility for drivers making a left turn from First Street SB to New York Ave EB.

⁶ North Capitol Street Needs Assessment, p. 32.



- DDOT should coordinate with FEMS to ensure the median design does not interfere with emergency vehicle response.
- DDOT should pursue traffic calming and sidewalk improvements at the high crash intersections bookending this project at New York Ave and First St NW and New York Ave and North Capitol St. The traffic calming should include resident concerns raised in the request for a traffic safety assessment under Ref: 21-00155439.

ON BEHALF OF THE COMMISSION,

Sincerely,

Rachelle Nigro

Rachelle Nigro,
Chair

CC: Charles Allen, Ward 6 Councilmember